



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 6 December 2001

Mr Ambassador,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you to the Vatican at the beginning of your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the Holy See. In accepting your Letters of Credence, I ask you to convey to His Majesty King Letsie III and to the Right Hon. Prime Minister my good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the peace and prosperity of the nation.

The tragic world events of recent times and the crisis in which the international community is now embroiled show more clearly than ever the need for radical personal and social renewal in order to bring greater justice and solidarity to the world. Such renewal will require enormous effort, because of the many imbalances which must be redressed.

This is dramatically true of Africa, whose peoples continue to suffer more than most under the weight of endemic poverty, political instability, social disorientation and mismanagement of resources. Throughout my pontificate, therefore, I have sought to draw attention to Africa's needs and to the responsibility of the richer nations to contribute more effectively to the development of her peoples; and I do so once again now, lest the troubles in other parts of the world divert attention from the urgent needs of Africa.

Regrettably, the international community's interest in the continent has not always been motivated by genuine concern for the well-being of her peoples. It is especially disappointing that, with some notable exceptions, little has been done to improve educational opportunities for young people; for this is surely one key to a better future for Africa's peoples.

The lack of progress means that smaller countries such as Lesotho are especially vulnerable to the economic pressures accompanying the process of globalization. Indeed, there is a danger that globalization will increase the gap between rich and poor, leaving developing countries such as yours to face ever more difficult and almost insurmountable challenges. In such a situation, the Church will continue to work for a globalization of solidarity, in order to ensure that the potential benefits will reach all peoples and all levels of society.

The pressures upon Africa are not only external; for within Africa itself the winds of change are blowing strongly (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 44), as people become increasingly aware of their human dignity and the need to defend their rights and freedoms. Many countries are striving to consolidate democracy at every level of public life, and to overcome resistance to the rule of law. Your Excellency has noted that your own country is fully engaged in the process of democratization, which will undoubtedly bring positive results in terms of furthering the values of human dignity and rights, good governance, dialogue and peace. The Holy See is fully supportive of this process, since there is no other foundation upon which a nation can build a future worthy of its citizens.

The process of change now evident in Lesotho is far from superficial. Indeed it goes to the very heart of your culture; for it touches people's moral sense, which in turn is intimately linked with religion (cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, 98). At the core of every culture is the attitude that men and women adopt to the greatest mystery of life – the mystery of God. As I noted in my Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, "Different cultures are basically different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence. When this question is eliminated, the culture and moral life of nations are corrupted" (No. 24). Therefore, as peoples, nations and international bodies seek to improve social and political life, bolster security and foster economic growth, they must not fail at the same time to promote those transcendent values and perspectives which are genuinely religious and which enable individuals, communities and nations to develop in a truly human way. Among the many implications of this is that the human person must be at the centre of all analysis and decision-making, so that the good of the individual and the common good may be effectively safeguarded and promoted.

It is this vision of the person and society which inspires the Catholic Church's commitment to serve the human family in every part of the world through educational, health care and social assistance programmes. In this regard, I very much appreciate your recognition of the positive influence of the Catholic Church in your country since the days of King Moshoeshoe I; and the Church will not fail to offer every possible assistance as Lesotho strives to move through these turbulent times into a stable and prosperous future.

Mr Ambassador, as you enter the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I assure you that the offices of the Holy See will be ready to offer whatever assistance you may need in the performance of your duties. May your mission serve to strengthen the bonds of understanding and

cooperation between your nation and the Holy See. Upon you, your family and the beloved people of Lesotho I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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